

James H. Devaughn House  
("Shuman's")  
516 King Street  
Alexandria  
Virginia

HABS No. VA-679

HABS  
VA  
7-ALEX  
148-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

JAMES H. DEVAUGHN HOUSE  
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Location: 516 King Street, Alexandria, Virginia

Present Owner: Demolished after 1969 by the Alexandria Redevelopment Housing Authority as part of an urban renewal project in the old commercial center of Alexandria.

Statement of Significance: Of great architectural simplicity, this building housed the furniture showrooms of James H. Devaughn. For many years prior to its demolition, it served as a bakery which became an Alexandria institution.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

## 1. Date of erection: 1855

On April 17, 1855 James H. Devaughn executed an agreement with Peyton Ballenger, his neighbor to the east, which indicates that the three-story building on the lot today was erected by Devaughn. The agreement stated that "The said James H. Devaughn, being about to erect a brick building on his lot," would see "That the eastern wall of said building, commencing 63 feet 11 inches south of King Street and running south 37 feet," would be built "so as to occupy throughout its whole length fourteen inches belonging to the said Ballenger." Devaughn also agreed "at his own expense," to "raise the chimneys of the said Ballenger's building and repair any damages which may be caused by his acts in erecting the said building;" and "to cause to be erected a brick wall so as to protect the main gable of said Ballenger's main building." Finally, it was agreed that Devaughn should "have the privilege of putting up a staircase in that portion of the alley between the said main buildings of the said parties which is unoccupied by the buildings."

## 2. Architect: Unknown

## 3. Original and subsequent owners: James H. Devaughn was the first owner.

On April 8, 1805, Adam Lynn, who built the house adjoining at 518-20 King Street (see HABS report VA-676), purchased the property later known as 516 King Street from William Halley and his wife for \$2,000:

Begin on the south side of King Street 123 feet 5 inches west of Pitt Street and  
Go east with King Street 23 feet to the eastern line of an alley three feet wide;  
Then south parallel to Pitt Street 166 feet 6 inches to an alley 10 feet wide;  
Then west with the alley and parallel to King Street 23 feet;  
Then in a straight line to the beginning.

In the Alexandria Daily Advertiser of February 7, 1806, Lynn offered for rent a two-story brick house on King Street "opposite Samuel Snowden's printing office." At that time the printing office was on the north side of King, between Pitt and St. Asaph Streets, so apparently Lynn's offer refers to the property he had purchased from Halley. This advertisement and the price Lynn paid indicate that there was a two-story brick house on the lot in 1805, and earlier.

This property, as well as all other real estate owned by Lynn, was sold at auction early in 1822. On February 5, 1822, under the terms of a deed of trust executed by Lynn on December 8, 1817, the Trustee conveyed the property to George Wise for \$2,225. This small increase in price, at a time of declining values, may indicate that Lynn had improved the property during his ownership. A week later, George Wise and his wife sold the property to James Van Sant for the same amount they had paid for it.

Van Sant was advertising his saddle and harness making business on King Street in 1815, and may have been there earlier. In the Alexandria Gazette and Advertiser of January 1, 1824, he announces:

#### REMOVAL

to the next square below his former establishment, in a brick house nearly opposite to the Mechanic's Bank on the south side of King Street, where he carries on the Saddle and Harness Making Business in all its various branches.

On February 7, 1854, James Van Sant and his wife sold the property to James H. Devaughn for \$5,000. The property remained in the Devaughn family until February 3, 1903, when it was conveyed to Louis P. Shuman and his son Louis E. Shuman.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Exactly when Devaughn started his business in Alexandria is not now known. On January 2, 1854, he advertised in the Alexandria Gazette:

HIGHLY IMPORTANT TO THOSE IN WANT OF FURNITURE AND HOUSE FURNISHING ARTICLES--At the cheap cash Upholstery and Furniture Ware Rooms, southwest corner of Pitt and King Streets, opposite the Marshall House, I would embrace this opportunity to thank my friends and the public generally, for their very generous patronage, and would respectfully assure them if they give me a call they shall not be disappointed with regard to quality or price of any article embraced in the business. I am induced to make these very flattering offers from a determination to accommodate any and all at the lowest cash prices, believing that a 'quick penny is better than a slow shilling.' I am prepared to furnish BEDS, BOLSTERS, and PILLOWS, CURLED HAIR (any quality or price), Cotton and Shuck MATTRESSES, SOFA, Pew and Chair CUSHIONS, LOUNGES, UNION and CHAMBER CHAIRS. I have on hand Sideboards, Bureaus, dining and breakfast Tables, cane and wood seat rocking and sitting Chairs, Looking Glasses, large and small sizes: clocks, eight day and thirty hours; and numerous other articles not necessary to enumerate. ... JAMES H. DEVAUGHN

After 1903 the Shuman family maintained a bakery and restaurant on the ground floor. At lunch time the long table in the back room attracted local business men and political leaders.

C. Bibliography:

Alexandria Deed Books L, p. 4; M-2, p. 46 and 51; P-3, p. 448; Q-3, p. 315; 49, p. 404. Early Alexandria newspapers as cited.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

This four story building, of architectural detailing typical of commercial facades of the nineteenth century constructed along King Street, towers above its neighbors.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Four stories, three bays.

2. Wall construction, finish and color: Brick, common bond, painted.
3. Chimneys: Two interior end chimneys.
4. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The shop front has been much altered for commercial purposes, but just prior to the building's demolition, it was of an attractive Art Deco style.
  - b. Windows and shutters: The windows at the second floor are sixteen-over-sixteen lights double-hung sash; at the third floor, twelve-over-twelve lights. The attic floor has a single twelve-pane sash in each bay. The windows are marked by simple wooden lintels.
5. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: Gable
  - b. Cornice, eaves: There is an enriched modillion cornice with fret and egg-and-dart moldings.

C. Description of Interior:

Side-hall plan. The first floor was extensively altered in the twentieth century. One of the three interior views shows adjoining rooms with simple mantelpieces, likely contemporary with the original construction of the building. Another interior view shows a simple mantelpiece, topped with an elaborate overmantel with mirror, characteristic of the late nineteenth century.

D. Site:

The building faces northward along the south side of King Street.

Prepared by Mrs. Hugh B. Cox of  
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Edited by  
Antoinette J. Lee  
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PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken in 1968 to document the commercial and residential buildings in downtown Alexandria which were to be demolished in an urban renewal project. Recording was cosponsored by the Historic Alexandria Foundation and the Historic American Buildings Survey.